Sex workers invade East Legon

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East Legon is gradually becoming a hot zone for sex workers (night sisters). 'Sisters,' as they are often called, seem to have strategically mapped out their business very well within the Accra Metropolis.

It has become a popular notion that the Accra headquarters of these sex workers is the Kwame Nkrumah Circle. Others also operate at Osu and Cantonments; right from the Togo Embassy roundabout through to the Cantonments Post Office, Italian Embassy and its environs.

Some also storm the malls to offer their services to interested clients who have come to shop for more than material goods.

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Change of location

As the urban sprawl in Accra consumes more residential and even rural areas, the 'sisters' have expanded the footprint of the world's oldest professions beyond the downtown core.

Sisters can, therefore, be found hard at work between the KFC East Legon Branch towards the Muslim Cemetery on the popular Abedi Pele Road.

Some of these sex workers who were spotted by this reporter wore suggestive hot sexy dresses, revealing generous amounts of cleavage, while others were also in hot pants and crop tops, with clutch purse and sling bags.

Others appear casually dressed in jeans, sandals and top, deceptively passing off the image of ordinary revellers and thereby avoiding undue attention from law enforcement agents.

The driving force behind the boom in prostitution at East Legon is the popular Atemuda Joint close to Abedi Pele's residence.

'Atemuda' is a local alcoholic preparation believed to contain aphrodisiac properties and it, therefore, draws a lot of young patrons.

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Obviously, Abedi Pele appears to be concerned about the situation as he has placed some barricades with inscription "no parking" to prevent idling vehicles that could attract his unwanted transient neighbours.

This, however, does not appear to faze the sisters and they still go close to the zone.

High patronage

Patronage at the Atemuda joint is very high, particularly on weekends, as patrons virtually take over the busy street, parking indiscriminately along both sides of the road and impeding the free flow of traffic.

According to traders around the joint, the creme de la creme of society patronise this joint and the sisters, drawn to clientele-rich territory, have also decided to pitch camp there.

These sex workers are so daring that some approach potential clients in their cars, while others strategically position themselves between the kenkey joint and sharwama base around Atemuda.

Some of the people who sell around the area refused to give their names because of fear of being attacked by some of these ladies whom they described as "wild."

However, they confirmed to the Mirror the activities of these sex workers. Traders in the area explained that the sex workers are now attracted to the place because of the class of people who come to wine and dine at the joint.

"Some notable footballers, musicians, broadcasters, politicians, businessmen/women come to eat and drink at this joint so they find here a good ground for their activities."

They further disclosed that some of these prostitutes are ‘freelancing’ students while others are consummate professionals in the trade.

"Sometimes these girls fight among themselves and even break bottles when a colleague outsmarts the other," said one of the traders.

"That is how we get to know who the real professionals are, as they maintain an informal cartel to keep out the non-professionals."

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Law on prostitution

Prostitution in Ghana is a criminal offence and, therefore, the police often go after these commercial sex workers. Interestingly, it looks like the ‘sisters’ cannot be bothered.

For example, recently, 31 commercial sex workers and two of their male patrons were arrested in a police swoop in Accra.

The operation, which started at 11 p.m., was part of efforts by the Cantonments Police to rid the streets of Accra of prostitutes.

Those arrested were aged 18 to 40.

Apart from criminal implications, sex work has various negative consequences, including the spread of sexually transmitted infections and risks to the health and safety of sex workers.

It is not uncommon for sex workers to be robbed, raped or assaulted by clients.

Research by the Ghana AIDS Commission puts HIV prevalence for female sex workers in Accra at the highest. The risks are also high for clients.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is just one, but sex workers sometimes lure clients into the clutches of robbers. Some also pass critical intelligence to partners in the armed robbery business.

Research again shows that many participants in the sex trade have been driven to Accra from rural areas because of poverty.

Despite the risks, the sex work business appears to be flourishing in East Legon and it is yet to be seen how the police can intervene to stamp it out.

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